

Nasrin Pourhosseini

Resting Injured Feet

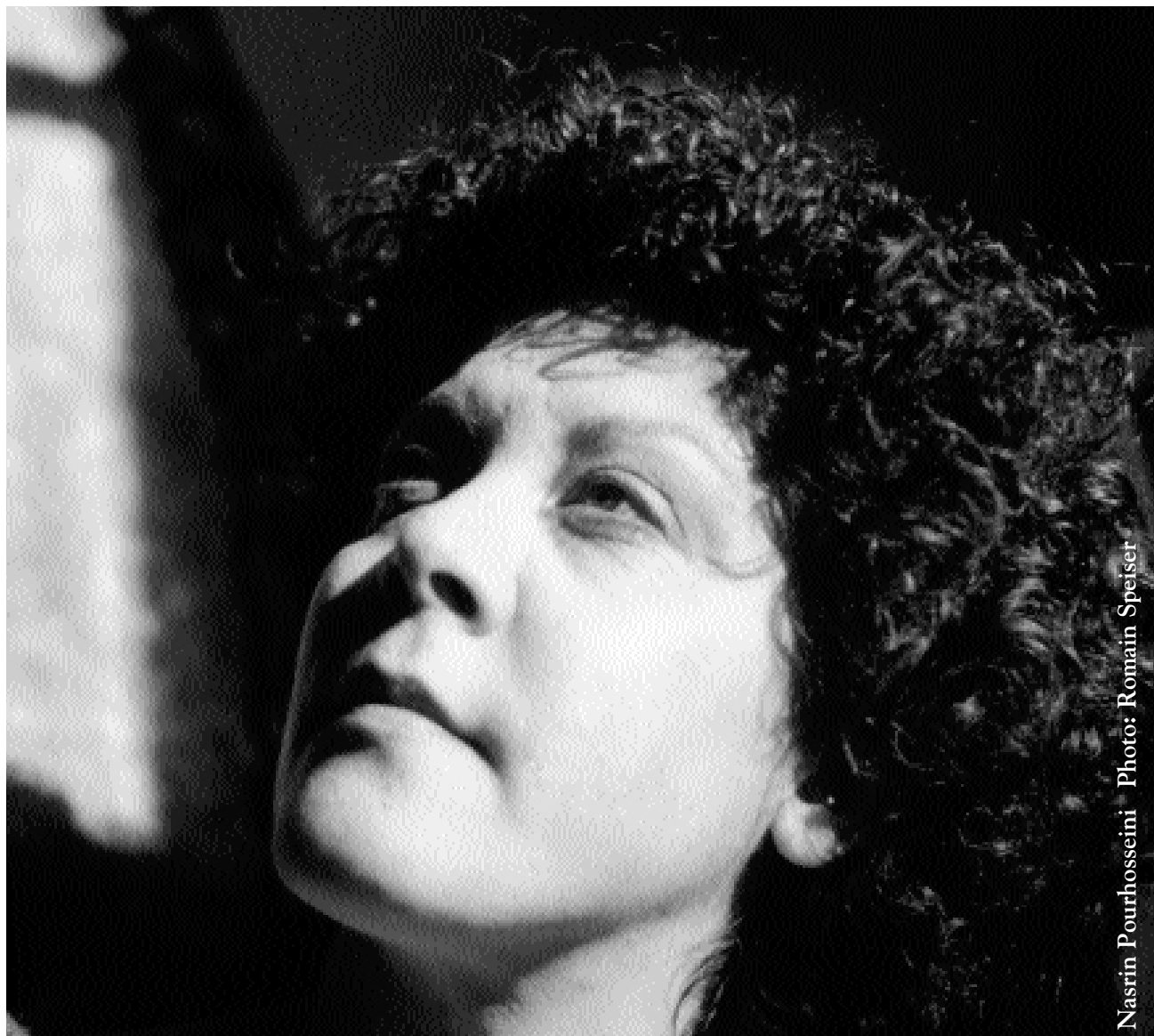
When I look back I cannot say when the journey began. I only remember a tiny hand clasped in my mother's strong one, while crossing a gigantic city that was supposed to belong to me, the place where I was born. But in those huge thoroughfares edged with thirsty trees, my only certainty was that I was a stranger, belonging neither to the location nor to the people around me, and certainly not to any nation.

I remember that feeling so clearly that today a shiver still goes up my spine when I realise that I was only three years old. What was it that convinced a tiny child that she did not belong where she should have done, that she was not dependent on the values or the laws that surrounded her, although she had an absolutely basic need for protection and identity in order to live in peace?

This feeling has never left me. Since then I have travelled across continents, I have learned to write back to front (Persian goes from right to left), I have learned the language of my passions, the language of my partners, the languages of work. I have loved intensely to the point of fighting with walls and seriously injuring myself. I have found myself totally drunk in an unknown town, holding in my hand the key to the hotel that I was totally incapable of finding, trying the key in all the locks in the street. (I had just finished playing one of those distraught Greek archetypes and all would have been fine if I had not, by chance, found a friend from my youth among the audience.)

I have crossed towns alone, by foot, bus or tram without ever losing myself anywhere, perdition being part of the journey itself. I have observed the path of life as through a glass: free to talk to the people you meet, you taste amazing food, enjoy the different rhythm, climate, sound, light, energy of each place, but always you stay outside the circle, you remain a foreigner. I have learned not to panic, to let myself glide, taking what comes and moving forward without desire. My desire projected itself into the *other place*. I have

This task has become for me an endless journey. It is truly physical and very concentrated because it works with thousands of years of experience of communication and of sounds of all kinds. But it is brief and ephemeral; it is actually made up of only a few conscious seconds a year.



been travelling elsewhere during the journey! But sometimes I have been afraid, very afraid of being where I was, and I have got off the bus.

The sounds of foreign languages have transported me far away. They have allowed me to achieve a very particular quality of peace and perception. They have given me the possibility of believing not in the compromised meaning of verbal exchanges but rather in the sense of the concretely uttered sound. When I realised that in public places I was hearing people's troubles

in their voices, I decided to avoid becoming an intuitive witch and instead to work conscientiously on sound and voice.

This task has become for me an endless journey. It is truly physical and very concentrated because it works with thousands of years of experience of communication and of sounds of all kinds. But it is brief and ephemeral; it is actually made up of only a few conscious seconds a year.

Occasionally I have found myself giving instructions in Persian to Hungarian actors who only understood their own language,

working with actors on texts in languages that were totally incomprehensible to me. I have acted the whole of a text by Racine for the French, without understanding a word of what I was saying. I have passed on Bulgarian songs to Danes, Georgian chants to Corsicans, Corsican chants to Czechs, whilst not possessing any written language in a proper way. And belatedly I discovered that I am dyslexic.

Returning to the country of my birth, I remembered with astonishment, that this country is made up of different peoples, whose physiognomy and language change totally depending on the region. In the bus in Tehran, I took enormous pleasure in the efforts to communicate between people with delightful accents and unimaginable expressions. What joy to hear for the first time a language that I believed I knew perfectly.

A stop in Paris: in the metro, like an international airport, similar to descriptions in the holy texts, different worlds cross, crowded together, then directing themselves towards a destination completely opposite to your own. Depending on the railway tracks and the stations, a door opens and all of a sudden Africa disembarks: the majesty and the grace of the bush. And then suddenly, between two echoing signals, enters a delegation of missionaries in habits. A traveller asks you the way, you ask him where he comes from, he replies that he has been wandering the world on foot for many years.

But to speak truthfully, I think that I hate journeys! In planes, trains, by minibus... I am sick and tired of it and I am eager for someone at last to invent "teletransport"!

I feel that I live constantly in foreign lands, even in my own garden. Journeys belong to these exotic places where we become freer to conceive new projects and where we are able to estimate the real impact of what we do.

The first time that I came across the text of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* in a workshop for research on sound, I was captivated and overwhelmed. I hardly spoke French, but the sense of the text went right through me despite my lack of understanding of the language. Father and daughter, vagabonds wandering on forbidden lands, were interrogated by the elders about their presence in these places. The two exhausted strangers knew nothing about these blessed lands where they had rested their injured feet for a moment. This became the beginning of a possible restingplace for me, a place where I could stay for some time in a forbidden land in order to work, to explore everything that is not found in a land that is promised and permitted.

Translated from French by Gilly Adams

NASRIN POURHOSSEINI (Iran/France) was born in Iran and has lived in France for twenty-eight years. She is a multi-disciplinary artist who participates in many projects as a singer, performer, director, musical director, composer and musical consultant. She founded Ti-Art Compagnie in France and Théâtre Fragmentaire in Germany. In recent years, her intense pedagogical activity has led her to direct professional actors, dancers and singers.